

Message Text

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UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 0458

ARA/PPC-PETER JOHNSON

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OREP, SHUM,AR
SUBJECT: CODEL REUSS -- MEETING WITH U.S. BUSINESS COMMUNITY
IN BUENOS AIRES

REFERENCE: RIO DE JANEIRO 0093

AT THE REQUEST OF REPRESENTATIVE HENRY HYDE, SOURCE CITED
REFTEL PREPARED FOLLOWING SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MEETING WITH THE
KANDERSTANDING THAT IT WILL NOT BE ATTRIBUTED TO ANY PERSON
OR ORGANIZATION:

QUOTE:

SUMMARY OF MEETING BETWEEN U.S. CONGRESSMEN AND LEADING
MEMBERS OF THE U.S. COMMUNITY IN BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, ON
JANUARY 5, 1978

AS SENIOR MEMBER OF THE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION, REP.
MOORHEAD EXPRESSED THE GROUP'S INTEREST IN HEARING AS MANY
POINTS OF VIEW AS POSSIBLE, AND ITS PLEASURE AT HAVING THE
OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH LEADING MEMBERS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN
COMMUNITY IN BUENOS AIRES.

MOST OF THE DISCUSSION WHICH FOLLOWED WAS IN ANSWER
TO QUESTIONS BY THE CONGRESSMEN AND CONCERNED TERRORISM
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AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS, WITH THE FOLLOWING MAJOR POINTS
MADE:

ANTI-SEMITISM DOES EXIST IN ARGENTINA, AS IN ANY
COUNTRY WITH A SIZABLE JEWISH POPULATION (THE LOCAL
JEWISH COMMUNITY GENERALLY IS DESCRIBED AS THE WORLD'S
FOURTH LARGEST), BUT ANTI-SEMITISM IS NOT OFFICIAL POLICY
AND ALLEGATIONS THAT JEWS ARE BEING SINGLED OUT FOR MIS-

TREATMENT BY THE ARMED FORCES AND POLICE BECAUSE OF THEIR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS ARE EXAGGERATED. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE SUSPICION OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AMONG OTHER ARGENTINES BECAUSE OF THE DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF JEWS AMONG LEFTIST EXTREMISTS. THIS, HOWEVER, WAS ATTRIBUTED TO THE FACT THAT EXTREMISTS OF THE LEFT HAVE CONCENTRATED THEIR RECRUITING EFFORTS IN THE UNIVERSITIES, WHERE THE PERCENTAGE OF JEWS ENROLLED IS MUCH HIGHER THAN THE PERCENTAGE OF JEWS IN THE POPULATION AT LARGE. IT WAS RECOGNIZED THAT THE RESENTMENT DESCRIBED ABOVE IS AN ELEMENT IN THE CASE OF JACOBO TIMERMAN, FOUNDER AND PUBLISHER OF THE NEWSPAPER LA OPINION OF BUENOS AIRES. BUT THOSE COMMENTING SAID THAT MR. TIMERMAN'S ARREST AND CONTINUED DETENTION WERE PRIMARILY THE RESULT OF HIS CLOSE TIES WITH PERONISTS BLAMED FOR WRECKING THE ECONOMY BETWEEN 1973 AND 1976.

THERE IS WIDESPREAD SKEPTICISM ABOUT ALLEGATIONS OF MASSIVE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN ARGENTINA, ESPECIALLY THOSE VOICED BY LIBERAL POLITICIANS AND SO-CALLED HUMAN RIGHTS "ACTIVISTS" IN THE UNITED STATES WHO HAVE BEEN NOTABLY SILENT ABOUT ATROCITIES COMMITTED BY EXTREMISTS OF THE LEFT.

ONE PARTICIPANT RECALLED THAT WHEN TWO AMERICANS, FORD MOTOR CO. MANAGER JOHN SWINT AND U.S. CONSULAR AGENT JOHN PATRICK EGAN, WERE MURDERED BY LEFTIST EXTREMISTS, SO-CALLED HUMAN RIGHTS ELEMENTS IN THE UNITED UNCLASSIFIED

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STATES -- INCLUDING THOSE IN THE U.S. CONGRESS -- WERE NOT HEARD TO DENOUNCE THE KILLINGS. THIS AND SIMILAR INSTANCES, HE SAID, HAVE CONVINCED MANY PEOPLE IN ARGENTINA THAT "HUMAN RIGHTS" GROUPS ARE MOTIVATED OR AT LEAST SWAYED BY POLITICAL BELIEFS RATHER THAN BY SINCERE CONCERN OVER HUMAN RIGHTS. THAT BELIEF, HE SAID, WAS RE-INFORCED BY U.S. CO-SPONSORSHIP OF A UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTION CONDEMNING CHILE WHILE IGNORING THE FACT THAT MANY COUNTRIES -- INCLUDING CO-SPONSOR CUBA -- HAVE FAR BLOODIER HUMAN RIGHTS RECORDS THAN CHILE.

ANOTHER PERSON COMPARED THE LOCAL SITUATION TO DESTRUCTION OF THE SYMBIONESE LIBERATION ARMY (IN LOS ANGELES), WHOSE DEMISE MOST AMERICANS SEEMED TO REGARD AS FULLY JUSTIFIED IN VIEW OF THE FEROCITY AND DESPERATION OF THE SLA. ARGENTINE EXTREMISTS, HE EXPLAINED, HAVE BEEN AND REMAIN EVERY BIT AS VICIOUS AND DESPERATE AS THE SLA WAS, AND MOST ARGENTINES LOOK UPON THEIR DISAPPEARANCE THE SAME WAY THAT AMERICANS SAW THE SLA EPISODE. ONE EXECUTIVE REVIEWED A FIVE-YEAR PERIOD DURING WHICH HE, HIS FAMILY, HIS HOME, HIS AUTOMOBILE AND HIS FACTORY WERE THE TARGETS OF BOMBS, BULLETS AND CONSTANT THREATS. DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE WAS HEAVILY GUARDED,

HE NEVER KNEW WHEN HE LEFT HOME IN THE MORNING WHETHER HE WOULD RETURN THAT EVENING, OR WHETHER HIS FAMILY WOULD BE ALIVE IF HE DID SO. "WHAT ABOUT MY HUMAN RIGHTS?" HE ASKED. "WHERE WERE THE PEOPLE WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT MY HUMAN RIGHTS? I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW."

A U.S. RESIDENT CITED TWO CASES WHICH HE SAID HELP PUT THE SITUATION INTO BETTER FOCUS -- EXPLAINING ATTITUDES, NOT JUSTIFYING THEM. THE FIRST WAS THAT OF AN ARMY COLONEL KIDNAPPED AND HELD FOR MONTHS IN A HOLE BENEATH THE FLOOR OF A SHACK ON THE EDGE OF BUENOS AIRES. HIS CAPTORS, HE SAID AFTZJ HIS ESCAPE, TOLD HIM THAT THEY WERE PREPARED TO WIPE OUT 20 MILLION PEOPLE -- WOMEN AND CHILDREN INCLUDED -- SHOULD THAT PROVE NECESSARY TO TAKE

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OVER ARGENTINA. (IT WAS NOTED THAT ARGENTINA HAS ABOUT 25 MILLION PEOPLE). THE SECOND ONE WAS AN ATTACK ON AN OFF-DUTY ARMY CAPTAIN AND HIS CHILDREN IN WHICH THE OFFICER AND ONE DAUGHTER WERE MURDERED AND A SECOND CHILD WOUNDED SO SEVERELY THAT SHE WILL BE A "VEGETABLE" AS LONG AS SHE LIVES. THE NORTH AMERICAN'S COMMENT WAS THAT THE OFFICERS AND MEN WHO SERVED WITH THE COLONEL AND THE CAPTAIN ARE NOT AT ALL INCLINED TO "GO EASY" ON EXTREMISTS WHO FALL INTO THEIR HANDS, REGARDLESS OF INSTRUCTIONS FROM ABOVE AND/OR PROTESTS FROM ABROAD.

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SEVERAL PERSONS COMPLAINED OF A GENERAL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING IN THE U.S. ABOUT WHAT ARGENTINA HAS

BEEN THROUGH BOTH POLITICALVQY AND ECONOMICALLY,
AND OF THE DESIRE ON THE PART OF THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED
TO SEE THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUFFERING PUNISHED --
WITHOUT BEING AFFORDED THE BENEFITS OF THE U.S. LEGAL

SYSTEM. ONE MAN EMPHASIZED THE FACT THAT LE LAWS OF
ARGENTINA AND OTHER LATIN NATIONS ARE BASED ON THE
"GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT" NAPOLEONIC CODE, RATHEROJ
THAN ENGLISH

COMMON LAW WITH ITS EMPHASIS ON INDIVIDUAL
RIGHTS. ANOTHER CITED THE WIDELY HELD BELIEF THAT
EXTREMISTS HAVE SO INTIMIDATED JUDGES -- MURDERING ONE --
THAT NO CIVILIAN JURIST WOULD DARE GIVE A STIFF SENTENCE
TO CONVICTED TERRORIST. STILL ANOTHER RECALLED THE
PERIOD DURING WHICH ENROLLMENT IN A SCHOOL ATTENDED
LARGELY BY THE CHILDREN OF U.S. RESIDENTS PLUNGED
FROM 1300 TO LESS THAN 300 IN TWO YEARS. FAMILIES HAD
TO FLEE WITHOUT TELLING THEIR FRIENQUZK CANRYING ONLY
KWAND LUGGAGE. PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCED THAT, HE SAID,
MAY FIND IT HARD TO KEEP IN MIND THAT TWO WRONGS DO NOT
MAKE A RIGHT, OR TO WORK UP SYMPATHY FOR LEFTISTS WHOSE
RIGHTS ARE BEING VIOLATED NOW.

QUIET DIPLOMACY APPEARS MUCH MORE Z FECTIVE IN
BRINING ABOUT IMPROVEMENTS THAN WELL-PUBLICIZED AND
ORCHESTRATED CRITICISM FROM WASHINGTON AND THE UNITED
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NATIONS, ESPECIALLY SINCE SUCH ATTACKS SEEM TO BE LEVELED
ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY AGAINST ANTI-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS
WHILE EXCESSES IN CUBA, CAMBODIA AND ANY NO. OF
AFRICAN AND MIDDLE EAST NATIONS GO UNNOTICED OR UNDE-
NOUNCED. AN EXAMPLE OF COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE ACTION CITED
WAS THE CONGRESSIONAL MOVE TO INCLUDE HUMAN RIGHTS IN
THE CRITERIA FOR LOANS FROM INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES.
THERE ALSO WAS DISCUSSION OF THE ARGENTINE GOVERN-
MENT'S ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM AND ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD
U.S. INVESTMENT. MOST PARTICIPANTS EXPRESSED OPTIMISM
AND, IN PARTICULAR, ADMIRATION FOR ECONOMY MINISTER
JOSE A. MARTINEZ DE HOZ AND HIS ASSOCIATES IN THEIR
EFFORTS TO REBUILD THE ECONOMY.
END QUOTE.
CASTRO

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